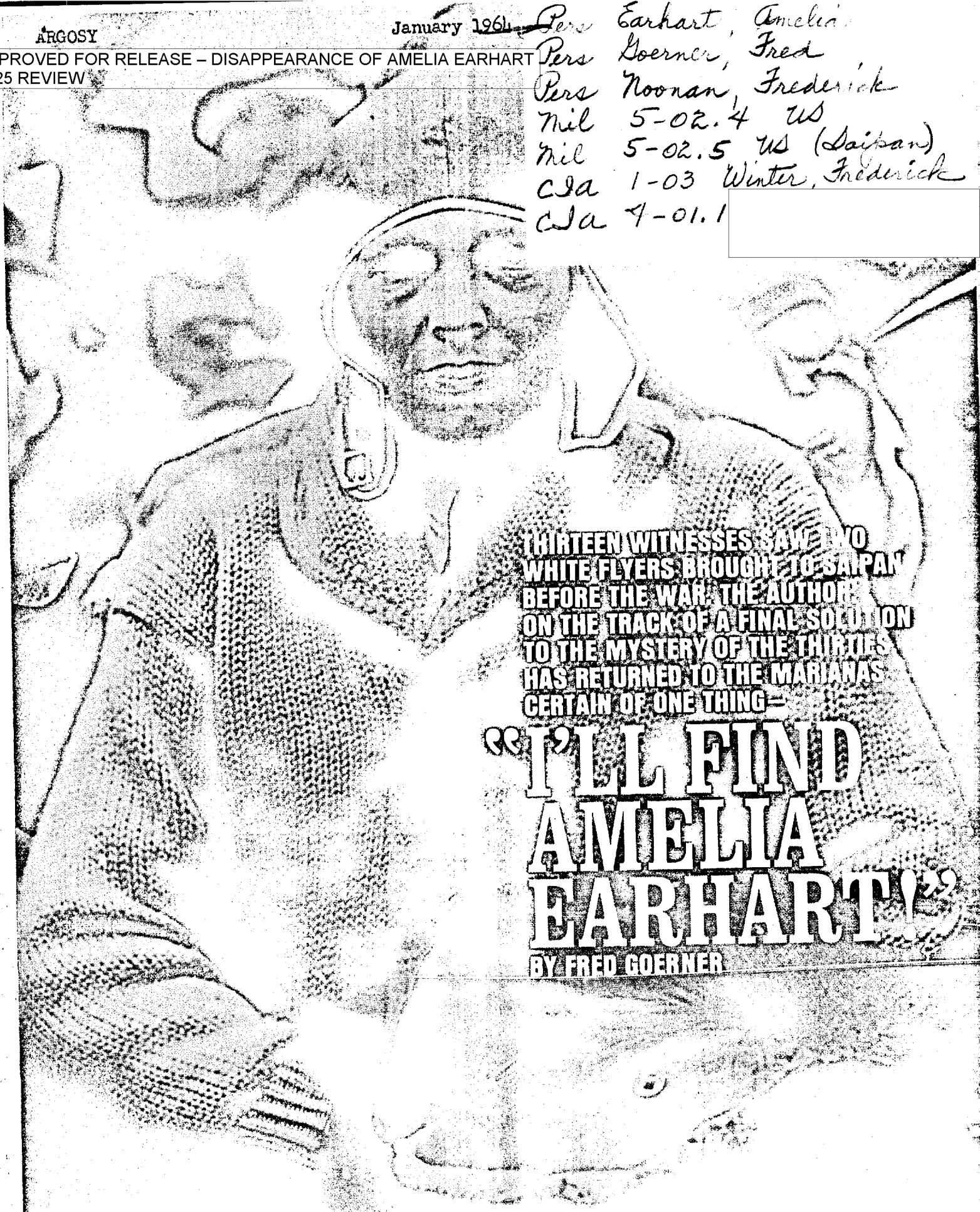
ARGOSY January 1964

APPROVED FOR RELEASE – DISAPPEARANCE OF AMELIA EARHART
2025 REVIEW

Pers Earhart, Amelia
Pers Goerner, Fred
Pers Noonan, Frederick
Mil 5-02.4 US
Mil 5-02.5 US (Saipan)
CIA 1-03 Winter, Frederick
CIA 4-01.1



THIRTEEN WITNESSES SAW TWO WHITE FLYERS BROUGHT TO SAIPAN BEFORE THE WAR. THE AUTHOR, ON THE TRACK OF A FINAL SOLUTION TO THE MYSTERY OF THE THIRTIES, HAS RETURNED TO THE MARIANAS CERTAIN OF ONE THING—

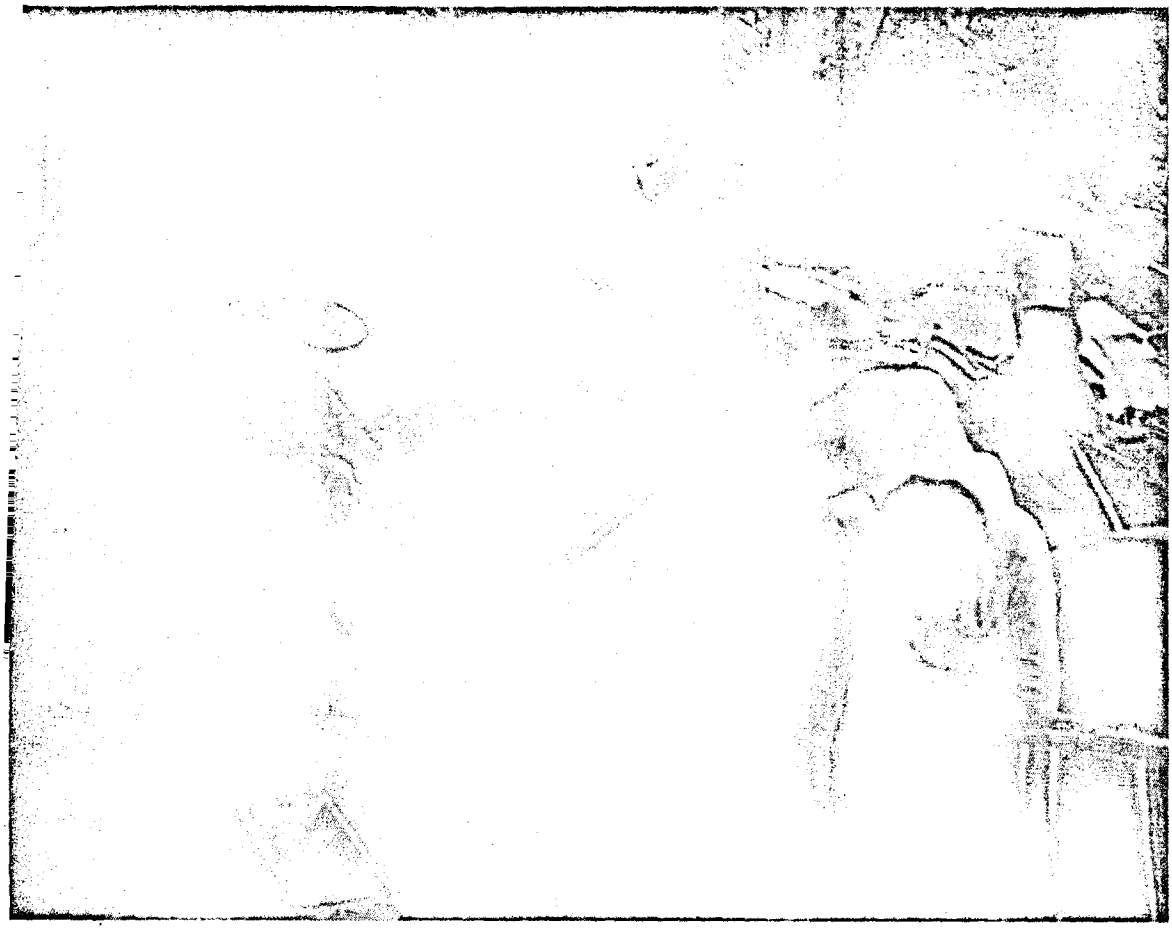
"I'LL FIND AMELIA EARHART"

BY FRED GOERNER

Mystery of her disappearance was never solved, though more and more clues point to capture by Japanese and cover-up by Navy

TOP LEFT: *Workers sift earth at Saipan grave believed to have been burial site of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan. Teeth and pieces of skulls were found, but identification was inconclusive.* ↓

BOTTOM LEFT: *This is jail where witnesses say "American woman flyer" was held by Japanese on Saipan before the war. Reports generally agree that she died or was executed by her captors.* ↓



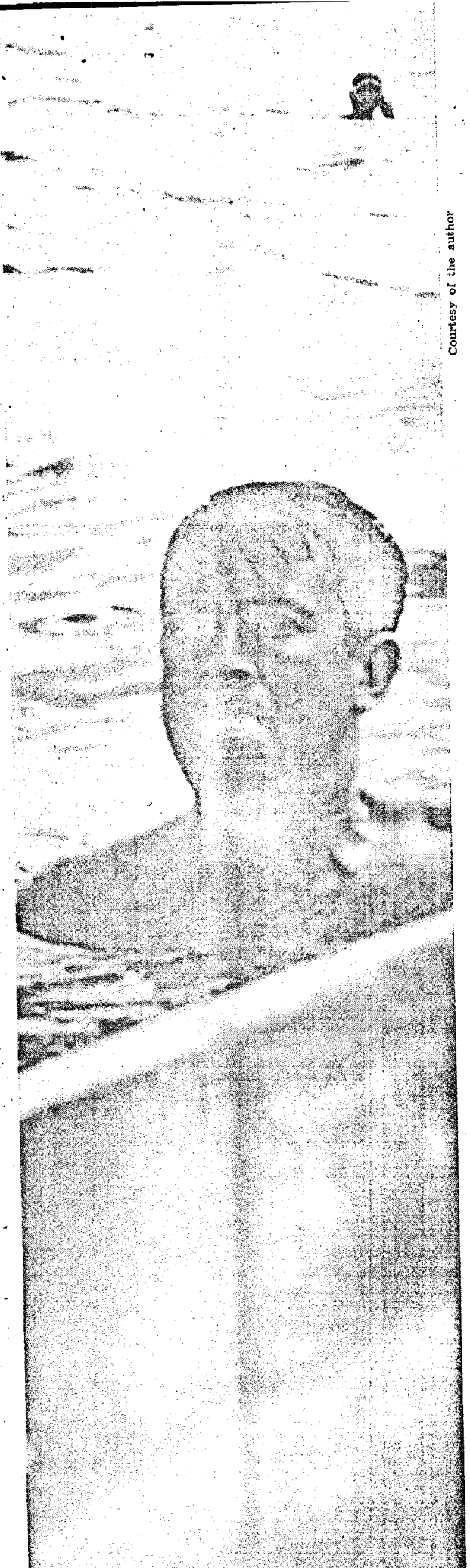
Courtesy of the author

"I'LL FIND AMELIA EARHART!" / CONTINUED

Find Amelia Earhart? What are you—some kind of nut?" That was the standard reaction I got in early 1960, when I first began to probe the morass of rumor and conjecture spawned by the disappearance of the world-famous woman flyer, Amelia Earhart, and her navigator, Frederick Noonan, in 1937, on a flight from Miami to Africa. Three years, three filing cabinets filled with research, and three trips to Saipan later, I don't hear that comment any more, from even the highest military and government leaders.

My search has produced the following:

- Twenty-three witnesses, including a lay brother of the Catholic Church, who testify that a white woman and man, flyers, arrived at Saipan in 1937.
- A former soldier from Connecticut, who was shown, on Saipan in 1945, "the unmarked grave of two white flyers, a man and a woman, who came before the war."
- A former member of Army Intelligence from New York, who "took a photograph from a Japanese officer during Saipan's 1944 invasion, showing Earhart in front of Japanese aircraft."
- An ex-Marine from Virginia, who fought across Saipan's Red Beach One in 1944 and "tore a snapshot of Amelia Earhart off the wall of a house the Japanese had occupied."
- A 1944 Navy Military Government Officer in the Marshall Islands, who testifies, "I learned two white flyers had landed near Majuro (*Continued on page* 96)



Courtesy of the author

***←LEFT:** Author Fred Goerner loads piece of wreckage from "two-motored plane" found in bay among fantastic tangle of World War II hulks. Search in Tanapag Harbor was conducted in 1960, but plane part turned out to be Japanese copy of Bendix plane equipment. New theory held by some Navy officials, as told to Goerner, is that Noonan and Earhart crashed elsewhere, were picked up by Japs and brought to Saipan.*

***BELOW:** Earhart's plane cracked up at Luke Field, Honolulu, after taking off on second leg of around-the-world flight, was repaired and trip was continued to mysterious finale. ↓*

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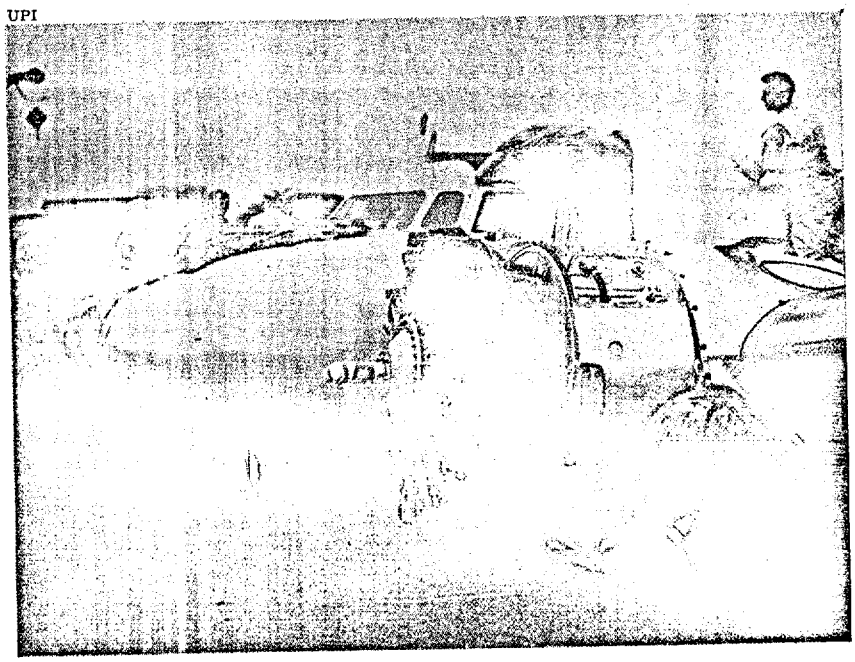


"I'LL FIND AMELIA EARHART!" *Continued from page 25*

before the war and were taken to Saipan by the Japanese."

- A United States Naval Manpower Division Expert, who says, "The flyers, according to the Marshallese natives, were taken away on a Japanese ship—presumably to Saipan."
- One of the most respected natives in the Marshall Islands, who backs up the stories of both: "The Japanese were amazed that one of the flyers was a woman."
- A former U.S. Naval Commandant of Saipan, who states: "The testimony of the Saipanese people cannot be refuted. An ONI man was here, and regardless of what they tell you in Washington, the story couldn't be shaken. A white man and woman were undoubtedly brought to Saipan before the war. Quite probably they were Earhart and Noonan. I don't believe they flew their plane in here. They were brought by the Japanese from the Marshalls. I think you'll find the radio logs of four U.S. logistic vessels will prove that."
- A series of strange discrepancies appearing in the official logs of the Coast Guard Cutter *Itasca*, Earhart's homing vessel at Howland Island in 1937, and the U.S.S. *Lexington*, the Navy carrier dispatched to search for her and Fred.
- Literally hundreds of bits of information, none of which have been satisfactorily answered by official sources, that point directly to the Saipan conclusion.
- A strong feeling that Earhart and Noonan may be the key that will make public the truth behind one of the most incredible and least-known periods in United States Military Intelligence history—the twenty years that led to Pearl Harbor.

The evidence is so great that, as you read this, I will once more be on Saipan. This is the fourth expedition in as many years, and this trip may well provide the final answer we have so diligently sought.

For me, it began in April, 1960, with Josephine Blanco Akiyama of San Mateo, California. The San Mateo *Times* had printed a series of articles in which Mrs. Akiyama was quoted as having seen "two white people, a man and woman, flyers, on Saipan in Japanese custody in 1937."

More than a little skeptical, I called her to ask why she had been late in making the story public.

"I told about it a long time ago," was her reply. "I told a Navy dentist I worked for on Saipan in nineteen forty-five."

The Navy dentist turned out to be Casimir Sheft, now in civilian practice in Passaic, New Jersey. Sheft didn't know that Mrs. Akiyama had come to the United States, but he did back up her story.

"I tried to do something about it," said Sheft, "but the naval officers I discussed it with didn't seem interested in starting an investigation. I felt sure Washington knew about it anyway, so, when I returned to the States after the war, I forgot about it."

The possibility of corroborative testimony seemed to me to be sufficient to warrant an expedition to Saipan. There was a ring of truth to the stories of both Mrs. Akiyama and Dr. Sheft, and it seemed logical to assume that if Josephine Akiyama, as a young girl, had learned about "two white flyers," there must be others still alive on that island who knew something.

Permission to visit Saipan wasn't easy to obtain. At first, it was denied, then, after various appeals, the Navy Department relented. Early in June, 1960, I left for the Marianas. I paused at Guam for clearance and Navy transportation to Saipan, and the aura of secrecy was deepened when naval officials told me that, on Saipan, I was to behave myself as if I were a member of the military.

From the air, Saipan, a twelve-by-five-mile dot, appears to be a tropical paradise. On the ground, the impression is entirely different. Scene of some of the most brutal fighting of World War II, Saipan still shows the scars. The rusting hulks of tanks and landing craft are scattered on her reefs, and the shattered superstructures of sunken Japanese ships protrude above the surface of her harbors. The jungles have covered the craters and foxholes, but in a day's time, enough live ammunition to start a small revolution can still be collected.

In the 1944 invasion, the United States forces suffered more than 15,000 casualties. The cost to Japan and the natives was even more dear. Twenty-nine of 30,000 Japanese troops and an estimated half the native population were killed.

The cloak-and-dagger atmosphere was not dispelled at Saipan. Immediately after landing, Commander Paul Bridwell, head of the Naval Administration Unit, whisked me to his quarters overlooking Tanopag Harbor, and spelled out some basic rules for my behavior while on the island. I was not to go further north on Saipan than the administration area, and under no circumstances, was I to go over to the east side of the island.

"What's this all about, Commander?" I asked. "What does this have to do with the Earhart investigation?"

"Not a thing," was the answer. "Are you *sure* you're here about Amelia Earhart?"

"Of course, I am," I answered. "What else? Why all the secrecy? Why can't I visit other parts of the island?"

"A lot of questions," replied Bridwell, "but I'm afraid I can't give you any answers. Just confine yourself to the area I've indicated and we'll get along fine."

You know about the bull and the red flag? Well, that's how such a conversation affects a newsman. But I decided I had come on the Earhart story, and on the Earhart story I would work.

It's an understatement to say that it's difficult to conduct an investigation when half the territory is denied you, but Bridwell was very anxious to be of help. He gave me the names of some ten natives "who should know if Earhart and Noonan were on the island." He personally led me to the natives and, to a man, they knew nothing. They were not only vague about everything before the war, but also *after* the war. I began to get the feeling I was listening to a phonograph record.

It was then I enlisted the aid of Monsignor Oscar Calvo, Father Arnold Bendowske and Father Sylvan Conover of the Catholic Church Mission at Chalan Kanoa. Nearly all of the fewer than 8,000 Chamorro and Carolinian natives who inhabit Saipan today embrace Catholicism. Monsignor Calvo, a native of Guam, Father Sylvan of Brooklyn, New York, and Father Arnold of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, had not been on the island before the war. A Spanish Jesuit priest and a lay brother had operated the mission under the Japanese. Father Tardio returned to Spain after the war, where he died. Brother Gregorio is stationed at the church mission at Yap.

Monsignor Calvo told me that the natives I had been led to by Commander Bridwell all worked for the Navy or a mysterious entity known only as NTTU, that inhabited the parts of Saipan I was not to visit, under penalty of no one knew what. Monsignor and the two priests had heard vague rumors about some white people held on the island before the war, but had not done any probing. They were glad, however, to help if they could.

I first laid some ground rules for the questioning: We would not ask people if they remembered the two white flyers captured by the Japanese before the war. We would first talk about recent years, then the period of the war, and finally pre-war Saipan. At a likely moment, Monsignor Calvo would ask, "Did you ever see or know of any white people on the island before the war?" If the reply was no, the questioning would be dropped. If the answer was affirmative, we would try to determine if a firm identification and a definite year could be established.

Here, I am going to lump together all of the testimony gathered during the three trips, 1960, 1961 and 1962. In questioning nearly a thousand Saipanese, Monsignor Calvo, the fathers and I turned up twenty-three witnesses, and this is their story:

Two white flyers, a man and a woman, arrived at Tanopag Harbor in 1937. The woman had very closely cut hair, and, at first, appeared to be a man. They were brought ashore in a Japanese launch and taken by command car into the city of Garapan to military headquarters. (Garapan was completely destroyed during the 1944 invasion.) After a period of time in

THE TREASURE OF THE DEAD MOUNTAINS

IT HAS all the elements of a classic thriller—a fortune beneath an Austrian lake, a race between two governments, men murdered in fiendish ways. But the most amazing thing about this story is that it's actually happening right now! Don't miss it in the

FEBRUARY ARGOSY

the building, the pair were separated. The man, who had some kind of a bandage around his head, was taken to the military police barracks stockade at Punto Muchot, while the woman was placed in a cell at Garapan prison. Shortly thereafter, probably within a few hours, the woman was taken from the prison back into Garapan to a hotel which served as a detention center for certain political prisoners.

The woman was kept at the hotel for a period of from six to eight months. Allowed a brief period of exercise each day in the yard, she was constantly kept under guard. After the aforementioned six to eight months, the woman died of dysentery. She was buried a day or so later, just outside a native cemetery near Garapan, in an unmarked grave. The man who had come to the island with her was taken with the woman's body to the graveside, beheaded and buried with her. The Japanese said several times that the two had been American flyers spying on Japan.

Who are these witnesses? Men who worked for the Japanese at the Tanopag naval base; men and women who lived in Garapan near the Japanese military police headquarters; a native laundress who served the Japanese officers, and many times washed "the white lady's clothes. In the beginning, she wore man's clothes," says this witness; a woman, who, as a young girl, lived next to the hotel and saw the woman nearly every day; a woman whose father supplied the black cloth in which the white woman was buried; a dentist who worked on the Japanese officers and heard what they said about the two American flyers; a woman who worked at the Japanese crematorium near the small cemetery and saw the man being taken to his execution, along with the woman who was already dead; a man who was imprisoned at Garapan prison by the Japanese from 1936 to 1944, and who saw the woman the Japanese called "flyer-spy."

"Are you sure they are telling the truth?" I asked Monsignor Calvo.

"I'm certain," he replied. "In the first place, these simple people couldn't concoct a story like this. They come from different parts of the island. There would be immediate discrepancies. I'm a native myself, and I know when a lie is being told. Finally, they have no reason for telling a lie. Nothing has been paid to them. What can they gain?"

Another question was logical: "Why haven't these people come forward before?"

"Why should they?" Monsignor questioned back. "If you knew these people's history, you wouldn't wonder. They have never had self-determination. The Spanish conquered them first, then the Germans. The Japanese forced the Germans out in nineteen-fourteen, and used the island for their own purposes until the American invasion. The Japanese had so convinced the Saipanese that your forces would torture them if they were captured, that whole families committed suicide by throwing themselves off Marpi Cliff. Now you have a United Nations trust over Saipan, and they aren't convinced you are going to stay. Two white people on Saipan before the war are of no interest to them. Why should they have told something that might have reflected badly on them?"

As we gathered testimony about the two flyers resembling Earhart and Noonan, a few tidbits about NTTU also came to light. NTTU, I learned, stood for Naval Technical Training Units. High wire fences surrounded the restricted area. Aircraft were landing at Kagman Field on the east side of the island in the dead of night. Large buses with shades drawn were regularly seen shuttling between the airfield and the jungle. There were a large number of American and civilian and military personnel within the restricted area, and they were seldom seen on the south end of the island. One native said he'd seen Chinese, presumably soldiers, moving through the jungle inside the restricted area.

I started to draw the conclusion that the Navy was giving Nationalist Chinese some special training. The guess was inadequate, although I felt my suspicions were confirmed by an inadvertent slip at the officer's club. Bridwell gave a dinner party in my honor, and one officer's wife, after a half-dozen cocktails, gushed, "Yes, you have to know a lot of languages on Saipan: Chamorro, Spanish, German, Japanese. And now we're even speaking Chinese."

There was a hush at the table as if someone had used an especially pungent four-letter word, and then the conversation picked up at double time.

One day, Father Sylvan took me up Mount Tapotchau, a little over 1,500 feet, the highest point on Saipan. From there, one can see the whole island, but not down into the jungle. I shot about a hundred feet of motion-picture film and a few stills, and then we headed back to the village.

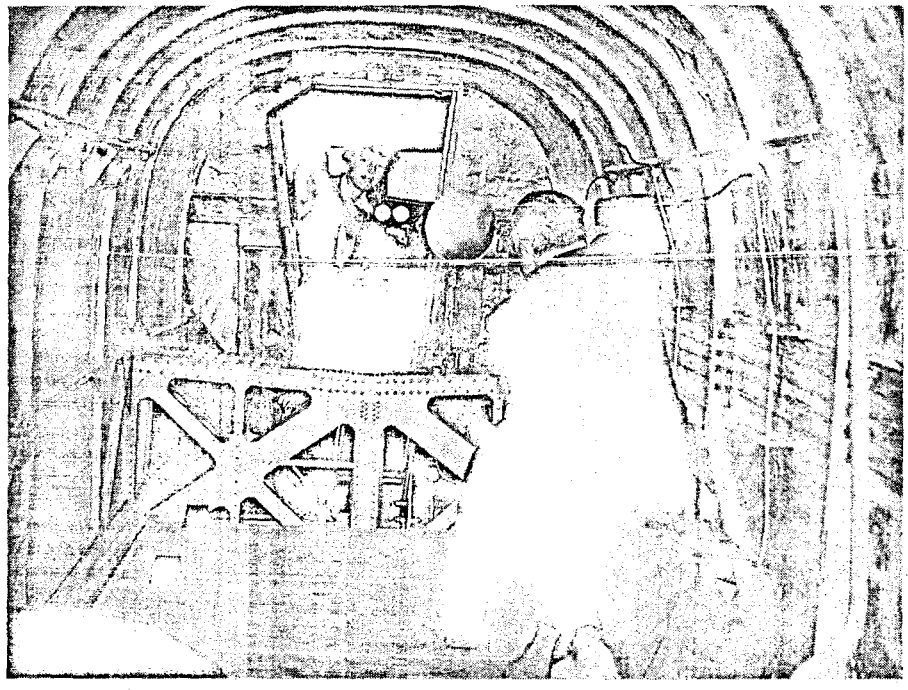
Commander Bridwell was waiting. "Understand you've been up Tapotchau with your cameras?" he said.

"Right. Nice climb and view. Couldn't see into your restricted areas, though."

"I wasn't really worried about that." He smiled. "But we'd like it very much if you dropped your film off with the PIO officers at Guam for a look-see."

Before I left Saipan in 1960, I let one question get the better of me: Did Earhart and Noonan fly their plane to Saipan? It seemed incredible. Saipan lies about 1,500 miles due north of their final take-off point, Lae, New Guinea. Saipan, with Howland Island as an intended destination, would have represented a navigational error of ninety to a hundred degrees. Yet there was that possibility. The question enlarged to: If they did fly here, could any part of that plane still remain on the bottom of Tanopag?

Monsignor Calvo brought me Gregorio Magofná and Antonio Taitano, who had been shelling and fishing in the harbor for many years. After viewing a photograph of Amelia's Lockheed Electra, Greg and Toni agreed that they knew of the wreckage of a "two-motor" plane. About three-quarters of a mile from what was once the ramps of the Japanese seaplane base, we went down in twenty-five to thirty feet of water.



Attractive flyer checks her Lockheed two-seater before taking off on ill-fated flight.

The bottom of Tanopag Harbor is like another world. Every conceivable type of wreckage is littered as far as a face mask will let you see. Landing craft, jeeps, large-caliber shells, what's left of a Japanese destroyer, the Japanese supply ship, *Kieyo Maru*, in deeper water beyond the reef, a huge submarine—all covered with slime and of coral.

The "two-motor" plane proved to be a huge, twisted mass of junk. From this incoherent form, we hauled several hundred pounds of vile-smelling wreckage to the surface. Later, I knocked a chunk of coral as big as a man's head from one piece of equipment, and found the first sign of aircraft—parts wired together. In the early days, before the advent of shakeproof nuts, this was standard procedure.

It was not until Admiral Wendt's tech-

nicians at Guam announced that the equipment possibly could have come from the type of aircraft Amelia had flown, that I began to have some hope for its identification. My motion-picture and still films were checked, and I headed back home.

In San Francisco, July 1, 1960, the tape-recorded testimony of Saipan's natives made an impression on the press, but the wreckage created much more interest. Several numbers found on the interior of what was once a heavy-duty generator were sent to Bendix Aircraft in New Jersey. Several days later, Bendix, which had manufactured much of the electrical equipment carried on the Lockheed Electra, announced that the bearings had been produced by the Toyo Bearing Company of Osaka, Japan. The equipment was a Japanese copy of Bendix gear!

The Saipanese witnesses somehow became lost in the reverberations from the Bendix press release, and Earhart and Noonan were again assigned to limbo.

If detailed, the next part of the investigation would fill a book. It concerns the search by the Navy and Coast Guard, in 1937. I'll sketch the high points in a very few words.

We obtained photostatic copies of the message log of the *Itasca*, Amelia's Coast Guard homing vessel at Howland Island, and the search report of the U.S.S. *Lexington*, the carrier dispatched by the Navy to hunt for the missing flyers. What we found produced a mystery within a mystery. Immediately after the plane was thought lost, the *Itasca* had radioed to the San Francisco Division of the Coast Guard a group of messages purportedly to have come from the Earhart plane. Three days later, *another* group of messages, also supposed to have come from Amelia, was sent to San Francisco. From the first to the second group, the time and content of every message had been much altered.

How could such discrepancies occur?

The answers of two of the radio operators who were aboard the *Itasca* that morning in 1937 were a continuing contradiction. William Galten, of Brisbane, California, was radioman, third-class. He maintained that the first group was correct. Leo Bellarts of Everett, Washington, was the chief radioman, charged with handling all the communications with the plane. He stipulated that the second group was accurate.

I went to see Galten, and when faced with the photostats and Bellarts' statement, he admitted, "I may have been mistaken. We were under great pressure."

You may have already guessed this: The *Lexington's* planes flew over 151,000 square miles of open ocean, an area determined only by the first group of messages, not one of which was correct as to time or content.

Why didn't the Navy double check with the *Itasca*, or why weren't the corrected group of messages relayed from San Francisco to the *Lexington*? There are only two possible answers: A completely unexplainable lack of communications between the Navy and the Coast Guard—or design. When you know that the Navy spent nearly $4,000,000 on the search, it becomes utterly incredible. Heads have certainly rolled for less.

The statement I have just made was contained in a monograph I sent to the Navy Department in 1962. Some five weeks later, I received a call from a chief at the Coast Guard office in San Francisco, advising me to check the next day's edition of the Navy *Times* for further information on the Earhart matter. The next day, the Coast Guard released a report that had been kept secret in a classified file for twenty-five years. It was the report of Commander Warner Thompson, who had been the commanding officer of the *Itasca* in 1937. It revealed that the Coast Guard had known next to nothing about the plans for the final flight; that the Navy appeared to be handling the whole show; that the Navy had brought special direction-finding equipment aboard the *Itasca*; that on the morning of the disappearance, a number of secret messages signed with the code name "Vacuum" were received aboard the *Itasca* addressed to one Richard Black, who ostensibly was a Department of Interior employe. The Coast Guard felt it had been used as a front and could not be blamed for anything when it had been given so little information.

The overtones of "intelligence" become quite audible, but I'm ahead of the story.

Early in 1961, I felt we had more than enough to warrant another trip to Saipan. In addition to further questioning of the natives and raising more of the wreckage from Tanopag Harbor to establish its identity, I wanted to follow through on information given to us by Thomas E. Devine of West Haven, Connecticut. Devine had been a member of an Army postal unit on Saipan in 1945, and claimed that a native woman had shown him the grave of "two white people, a man and a woman, who had come before the war." Devine said he had not connected the incident with Earhart and Noonan until he read of our investigation. For evidence, he produced pictures of the native woman and an area near a tiny graveyard where the woman had lived. He also provided a fairly detailed description of the unmarked grave's location outside a small cemetery.

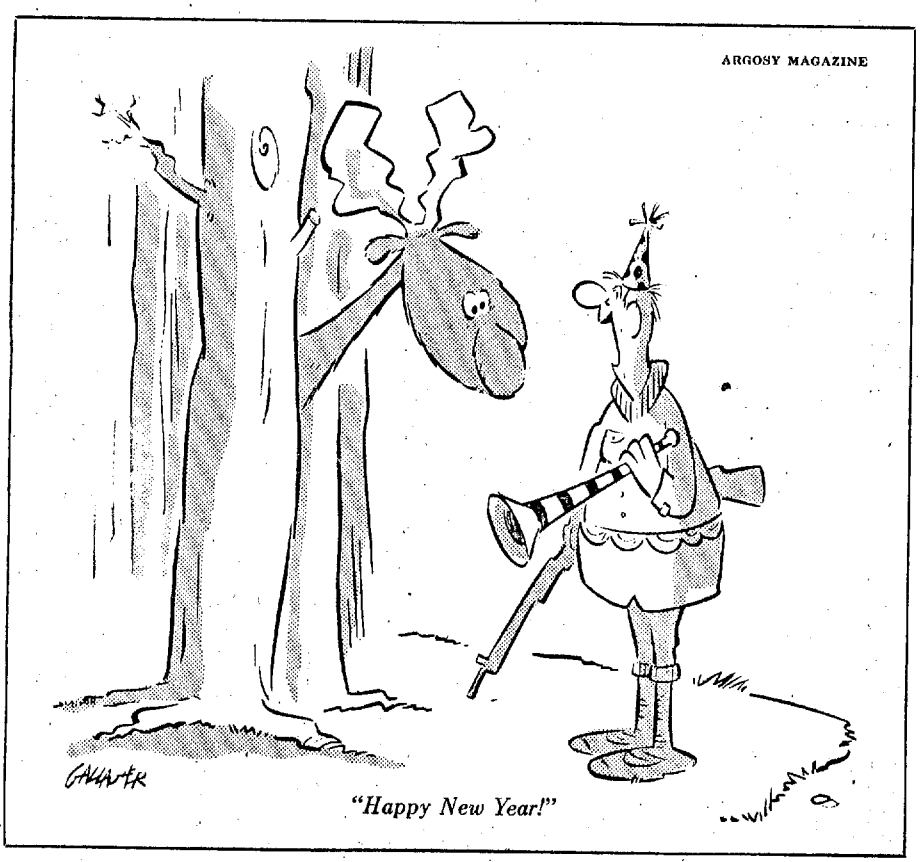
Navy permission to go to Saipan was really tough to come by this time. The first application was filed in April, 1961, and for several months, there was no answer.

In June, Jules Dundes, CBS Vice President in San Francisco, called Admiral Smith's office in Washington, and finally got Captain Alexander, then the Navy's Deputy Chief of Information, on the phone. Alexander flatly stated that permission to return to Saipan was denied.

Not liking the tenor of that conversation, Dundes called CBS Vice President Ted Koop, in Washington, who promptly went to work on Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense. Early in September, I departed for the now familiar Marianas—with the necessary clearance.

I went back with a bit more information about our friend, NTTU, too. Control of Saipan had been transferred from Department of Interior to the Navy by Presidential order in 1952. Shortly thereafter, a contract amounting to nearly $30,000,000 was let to an amalgamation of three companies, Brown-Pacific-Maxon, for the construction of certain facilities on the north and east side of the island, the concrete foundations of which went down ten to twenty-five feet.

At Guam, I told Admiral Wendt what I thought might be going on. Then, at Saipan, I met once again with my old friend Commander Bridwell, who quickly reiterated that I was to stay away from the north end and the east side of the island.



"Happy New Year!"

"Look, Paul," I replied, "I'm not after NTTU. Quit muddying the water for me on the Earhart story. Let us get the final answer and you'll have it off your back.

"It's not my business if you're training Nationalist Chinese or operating ballistic-missile sites; that's a security matter."

"We're glad you feel that way," returned Paul, "but if you do come up with the final answer to Earhart, a dozen newsmen will be knocking on our door."

"Don't you believe it," I retorted. "No one is going to send a photographer six thousand miles to duplicate something we already have. Just co-operate with me."

Bridwell finally did co-operate—the day before I left Saipan for the second time, and only after I had received an invitation to enter the super-secret NTTU area. Bridwell believes strongly that Amelia and Fred were brought to Saipan in 1937 and their lives ended six months to a year later, but at that time, he was obliged to block the investigation in any way he could. He and the rest of the Naval Administration Unit were fronting for the Central Intelligence Agency.

I know now that word was passed to natives working for the Navy or NTTU that it would be best to reply in the negative to questions asked about any Americans being on the island before the war. Bridwell even attempted to get witnesses to change their testimony. In one case, he was successful. Brother Gregorio, now with the Church at Yap, had been on Saipan in 1937. Father Sylvan had seen him during the year I had been gone. Brother Gregorio said that he had heard from several people that a white man and woman, reportedly flyers, had been brought to Saipan. He had not seen them himself because the Japanese had restricted him to the church, but he gave the names of the two men who had told him. Commander Bridwell got to them first. The pair had jobs with the Navy and refused to talk. I hold no grudge. The Navy did what it felt necessary to protect the CIA.

During the '61 stay, Magofna and Taitano took me back down to the wreckage off the old seaplane ramps, and an afternoon of diving produced conclusive evidence that the "two-motor" plane was Japanese. A corroded plate from a radio-direction finder unmistakenly bore Japanese markings.

Father Sylvan and I then went to work on Thomas Devine's information. The small graveyard was easy to locate. One of Devine's photos showed a cross in the graveyard; another pictured an angel with upraised arms surrounded by crosses and tombstones. The only change was the jungle. It had grown up forty or more feet over the cemetery. Devine had also sent a picture of the woman who had shown him the grave site. Father Sylvan showed the print to a native who works for the mission, and the old man brightened.

"Okinawa woman," he said. "Sent back Okinawa after war."

Father Sylvan acknowledged that many Okinawans and Koreans had been brought to Saipan by the Japanese before the war to build airfields and harbor installations. All who hadn't married Chamorros or Carolinians were repatriated.

Devine had indicated that the grave site was outside the cemetery. Another of his photographs, taken from a narrow dirt road with the island's mountain range in the background, was supposed to have the most significance. "The grave," Devine had written, "is located thirty to forty feet to the left of this road."

Father Sylvan and I matched the photograph to the terrain as best we could, and one of the natives showed us where a small dirt trail had run past the southern boundary of the cemetery. Pacing off "thirty to forty feet to the left," we arrived in a grove of trees, and with a crew of eight Carolinian natives, excavation began. We went to a depth of six feet among the trees, and then moved slowly to the west. About one o'clock, the afternoon of September twenty-first, Commander Bridwell, who had been watching the proceedings, let out a shout and brushed the natives back from a newly opened area.

Dozens of pieces of skull and many teeth were visible at both ends of a shallow grave not more than two feet in depth. Large teeth were found at one end, smaller ones at the other—indication that at least two individuals, perhaps a man and a woman, had been buried head to foot. As quickly as Bridwell had moved, several shovelfuls had been thrown aside, so, for the next four days, we sifted every bit of earth for a dozen feet around. Seven pounds of bones and thirty-seven teeth were recovered. The island's doctors inspected the remains, and generally agreed that the grave had been occupied by a man and a woman. The dentists felt there was a strong possibility that the people had been Caucasians, as some of the teeth appeared to contain zinc-oxide fillings; the Japanese had never used that material.

The afternoon the excavation was completed, we carefully wrapped the remains in cotton, and Father Sylvan placed the package in the church vault.

That night came the strangest experience of my life. I was staying in what was laughingly referred to as the "Presidential Suite." It was nothing more than a Quonset hut, about twenty-five yards above the commander's quarters. I don't know what awakened me. It was about two o'clock in the morning and it was raining quite hard outside. As I sat bolt-upright on the cot, there was a flash of lightning, and I saw a man in the room by the door. I jumped from the cot and yelled at him, "What do you want?"

As he turned, I saw he had a machete in his hand. He stared at me for a second, then ran out through the front of the hut, banging the screen door behind him. I pursued him to the door, and in the glare of the running light on the front of the hut, I got a good look at him as he raced across the asphalt road and plunged into the jungle. He was a native—a man I was to hear a lot more from later.

As I tried to figure out what had happened, I was shaking so badly I could hardly light a cigarette.

"Were you really awake? Did you really see the man, or did you dream it?" I questioned myself. Wet sandal marks around the room leading from the door answered my question.

"What did he want?" was the next logi-

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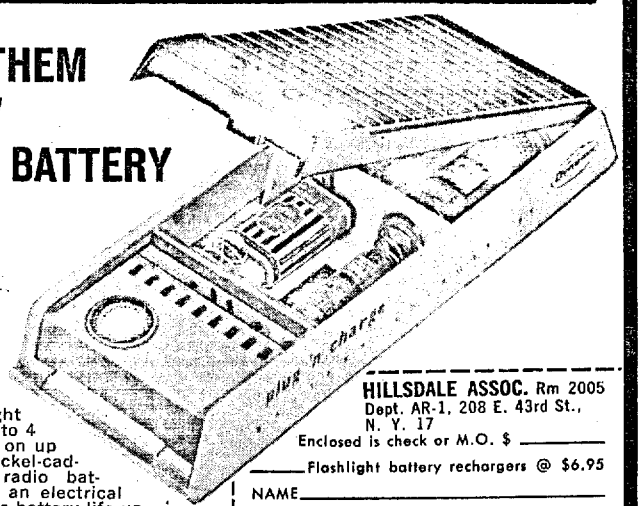

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cal challenge. Certainly not my life. If he had wanted, he could have killed me as I lay on the cot. Expensive motion picture and still cameras and tape-recording equipment rested on the cot next to me. Several hundred dollars in cash was exposed on top of the bureau next to my passport. Nothing had been taken. Nothing had been disturbed. Nearly a year was to pass before the realization came as to what my visitor sought: The package of human remains I had given to Father Sylvan for safe-keeping.

The next day, I asked Bridwell for permission to take the package to an anthropologist in the States for study. He didn't want the responsibility, and cabled Washington for clearance.

That night, as we waited for Washington's answer, I received a mysterious summons by phone from a man named Schmitz. I was to be admitted to the NTTU area for the purpose of addressing their personnel on the subject of Amelia Earhart. A civilian in a handsome new car picked me up at my Quonset, drove me by circuitous route through the jungle, up a hill and deposited me in front of a *night club*! I mean a *night club*—complete with canopy leading from the road, dance floor, bar and stainless steel kitchen.

Mr. Schmitz (I never learned his full name) met me at the door and escorted me to the bandstand and waiting microphone. For the better part of an hour, I told an audience of several hundred, including many wives, of the investigation. Afterward, the applause was warm and prolonged, and many came forward to ask questions or contribute bits of information they had heard from the natives. Mr. Schmitz and I had a drink at the bar and chatted for a while and then I was driven by the same circuitous route back to my "Presidential Suite."

Just before I left the island, Bridwell began to co-operate. The invitation to NTTU had worked wonders. He readily admitted, "An ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) man has been here checking on what you turned up last year. Most of the testimony couldn't be shaken. A white man and woman were undoubtedly brought to Saipan before the war."

The Commander went on to expound his own theory: "I don't believe Earhart and Noonan flew their plane in here. I think you'll find they went down near Ailinglapalap, Majuro and Jaluit Atolls in the Marshalls. The Japanese brought them to Saipan. A supply ship was used to take them to Yap in the western Carolines, and a Japanese naval seaplane flew them to Saipan. That's why some of your witnesses said they came from the sky."

"What have you got that's tangible to prove that?" I naturally wanted to know.

"I think you'll find all the proof you need," replied Bridwell, "contained in the radio logs of four U.S. logistic vessels which were supplying the Far East Fleet in 1937. Remember these names: *The Gold Star, Blackhawk, Chaumont* and *Henderson*. I believe they intercepted certain coded Japanese messages that you'll find fascinating reading."

Returning to San Francisco October 1, 1961, I was still without the last key to the Earhart puzzle, and without quite a few keys to NTTU. A few days later, a strange call came to me at KCBS from a Mr. Frederick Winter of the Central Intelligence Agency.

"I'd like to visit with you regarding a matter of national security," he said.

"Of course," I replied. "Come on up to our studios in the Sheraton-Palace."

"Thanks, but I'd rather not," rejoined Mr. Winter. "I'll meet you in the lobby."

"How will I know you?" I asked.

"Don't worry about that," assured Mr. Winter. "I'll recognize you."

Mr. Winter located me without any trouble, and suggested that we drop into the coffee shop for a bite of something. As long as I live, I'll never forget that conversation. Mr. Winter had a dish of strawberry ice cream, and I had a cup of coffee. We talked, there in the coffee shop, about one of the best-kept, most important U.S. Intelligence secrets since the end of World War II.

"Mr. Schmitz has alerted us," began Winter, "that you have turned up a good deal of information regarding NTTU and Saipan. Washington has asked me to talk to you about the matter and to ask you to withhold this information from publication or broadcast until you are given a release. We know you to be a good American, and we hope you will comply."

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I agreed. Mr. Winter didn't know that I had already made that decision.

The conversation lasted a little more than a half-hour, and then, with a hearty handshake, we parted. I have not seen Mr. Winter since, although we've had one brief telephone conversation.

Was Mr. Winter really from the CIA? I wondered for a while myself. I hadn't asked for identification, but I wouldn't have known the proper card anyway. For protection, I wrote a note to John McCone, head of the CIA in Washington.

"We're happy to inform you that Mr. Frederick Winter is the man he represents himself to be," was the answer.

Lengthy conversations began with the Navy Department about whether an expert was to study the remains. The Navy stipulated a number of things that must be done before the package could be released; among them was written permission from the next of kin. There was no definite indication the remains were those of Earhart and Noonan, but the Navy wanted as much time as possible and was taking no chances.

Dr. Frank Stanton of CBS flew out from New York, and the entire situation was discussed. We all strongly felt that nothing should be broadcast or printed before a positive identification of the remains could be made. If identification was not possible, the package could be returned to Saipan without publicity. The primary consideration should be for the next of kin.

I visited Amelia Earhart's sister, Mrs. Albert Morrissey, in West Medford, Massachusetts, and presented the facts of the total investigation.

She thanked us for our efforts and granted permission on behalf of Amelia's mother, who has since passed away at ninety-five years of age.

A week later, I met Mrs. Bea Noonan Ireland, the remarried widow of Fred Noonan, now living in Santa Barbara, California. She also gave her consent to do whatever was necessary to write an end to the mystery.

Dr. Theodore McCown, University of California anthropologist, was then asked to do the study should the Navy release the remains. He agreed.

It was another month before Navy permission was granted, and unfortunately, we had to learn of it from a wire service. A previous arrangement had been made for Father Sylvan to take the package from Saipan to Guam, address it to Dr. McCown, and ship it by commercial airliner to its destination.

Navy permission went direct to Saipan, and Father Sylvan carried through with his part. Someone on Guam, however, perhaps a customs official, leaked the story to a representative of Associated Press, and it was on every broadcast and in every paper in the country before we could do anything to stop it.

There was nothing to do but admit we had been pursuing the investigation.

Dr. McCown's study took a week, and his findings were disappointing in the extreme. Instead of two people, we had found three, perhaps four. At least one man and one woman were represented by the remains, but the strongest indications were that these people had been indigenous to the Saipan area. The "zinc-oxide" fillings that had excited the dentists on Saipan turned out to be calcified dentine. X-rays showed there were no metallic fillings present. "The hypothesis that the remains represented those of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan," wrote Dr. McCown, "therefore is not supported."

Privately, however, McCown told us, "Don't be discouraged. You may have missed the actual grave site by six or sixty feet. That's the way it is with archaeology. In all my experience, I have never known a story with as much testimony supporting it as this one has, not to have some basis in truth."

Thomas Devine was also disappointed. His disappointment turned to frustration when he saw a complete set of photographs I had taken of our excavation and the surrounding area.

"You were on the wrong end of the cemetery," he wrote. "I'm sure now that the site was outside the northern perimeter, not the southern. There was a small

dirt road that ran by the north side, too. Did you try to match that one photo against the mountain from the north side?"

I admitted I hadn't because the jungle had grown too high in that area.

Nineteen sixty-one's news reached the front page of nearly every newspaper in the nation, and a number of persons were motivated to come forward with bits of information.

Eugene Bogan, now a Washington, D.C. attorney, had been the senior Navy military government officer at Majuro Atoll in the Marshalls after the January, 1944, invasion. Bogan claimed that several natives told him that two white flyers, one of them a woman, had landed their airplane near Ailinglapalap, close to Majuro, in 1937, and were taken away on a Japanese ship bound for Saipan. "The name of one of the natives is Elieu," Bogan said. "Elieu was my most trusted native assistant."

Charles Toole, of Bethesda, Maryland, now an expert in the Manpower Division of the Under Secretary of the Navy, had been an LCT Commander, plying between the same islands in 1944. "Bogan is absolutely right," said Toole. "I came across the same information myself."

Why didn't Bogan and Toole file an official report on their findings?

"We were discouraged by the senior officer responsible for that over-all area of the Marshalls," they replied. "The reason he gave was that there wasn't any sense in raising false hopes at home that Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan might still be alive."

Ralph R. Kanna, of Johnson City, New York, has worked seventeen years in a responsible position for the New York Telephone Company. In 1944, Kanna was sergeant of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, Headquarters Company, 106th Infantry, 27th Division, during the assault on Saipan. Kanna's duty was to take as many prisoners as possible for interrogation purposes.

"On Saipan, we captured one particular prisoner near an area designated as 'Tank Valley'" wrote Kanna. "This prisoner had in his possession a picture showing the late Amelia Earhart standing near Japanese aircraft on an airfield. Assuming the picture of the aircraft to be of value, it was forwarded through channels to the S-2 intelligence officer. But more important, on questioning of this prisoner by one of our Nesei interpreters, he stated that this woman was taken prisoner along with a male companion, and subsequently, he felt both of them had been executed. From time to time, I have told these facts to associates, who finally have convinced me to write."

Kanna went on to list three Nesei interpreters who served with his unit during that period: Richard Moritsugu, William Nuno and Roy Higashi.

I have located and spoken personally with both Moritsugu and Nuno. Moritsugu, now living near Honolulu, is unwilling to discuss his part in the Saipan invasion. Nuno lives now in Pasadena, California, and indicates that he was not with Kanna that day in 1944. I found Roy Higashi just three days ago. He is living in Seattle, Washington, and almost seemed to be expecting my call. He said he had something to tell me, but would rather do it in person. Higashi is bringing his family to San Francisco on vacation, and will contact me on arrival. I'm sorry I cannot include his information in this article because of the publication deadline.

Robert Kinley of Norfolk, Virginia, was a demolition man with the Second Marine Division. Pushing inland from Red Beach One, his squad came upon a house near a small cemetery. Kinley went inside to clear it of any booby traps. On a wall, he found "a picture of Miss Earhart and a Japanese officer. The picture was made in an open field, showing only a background of hills. The officer wore a fatigue cap with one star in the center." Kinley says he took the picture with him, but everything was lost in July, 1944, when he was wounded.

Robert Kinley then added a bit of provocative information. "The Japanese had a command post in a tunnel next to the house where I found the picture. My demolition team closed up the tunnel. You might be able to find more pictures or records in the tunnel."

Kinley sent along a map showing the location of the house, tunnel and graveyard. It coincides almost perfectly with the area Devine was shown by the Okinawan woman.

In September, 1962, I went back to Saipan for the third time, but I had to do it on my own time and money. KCBS wasn't uninterested, but there's a limit to financial soundness in making assignments. I couldn't drop it, though; there was just too much to go on, and no one in official places had been able to satisfactorily answer any of the many questions raised by the investigation.

Fearing that I might have become prejudiced, I took along Ross Game, the editor of the Napa, California *Register*, consulting editor to the nineteen Scripps' newspapers in the West and Secretary for the Associated Press on the Pacific Coast. We picked up Captain Joe Quintanilla, Chief of Police of Guam, and his detective-lieutenant, Edward Camacho, and took them along, too.

Things had changed in one year. My, had they changed! Commander Bridwell was gone; the Navy was gone; Mr. Schmitz was gone—and NTTU was gone. I should say NTTU *were* gone, since there were eleven of them.

The fence gates were open, and we went in. Commander Bridwell and the Naval Administration Unit had been a front for one of the most elaborate spy schools in the history of this or perhaps any country. The faculty consisted of civilian professors of espionage, the very same men whom I had addressed that night at the club. It's hard to imagine the impact of coming out of the jungle and discovering a modern town of ninety two- and three-bedroom houses with concrete roofs, typhoon-proof and modern in every respect even to modern landscaping; a modern apartment house for the single members of the faculty, a library, snack bar, barber shop and theater-auditorium. Seven of the NTTU training facilities were located on the north end of the island and four on the east. For the spy-school student, there were sturdy, concrete barracks

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at each site and other concrete buildings in which classes were held.

For ten years, the students were flown into Kagman Field at night, taken in buses with the shades drawn to any of the eleven areas, trained in techniques of spying and a very specialized brand of guerrilla jungle warfare. Most of them never knew where it was they were being trained. When their courses were completed, they were dispatched on any one of a thousand missions, penetrating through or parachuting behind Communist lines. Nationalist Chinese, Vietnamese, and men from other areas were brought to Saipan, trained and then assigned.

What has happened to the $30,000,000 worth of buildings?

They're being used very nicely, thank you. The Department of Interior has taken over control of the island again and has fallen heir to the whole works, along with about $1,000,000 worth of equipment Commander Bridwell and his front group left behind.

Where did the NTTUs go? *Why* did they go?

I can't answer the first. I don't know that I want to.

The second has to do with the focus of international attention the Earhart story placed on Saipan twice within two years, but more importantly, the United Nations inspection team for the Trust Territory of the Pacific gave Commander Bridwell and the Navy bad marks in 1961 for the administration of Saipan. They had done too much rather than too little for the people of Saipan. It was out of line with what the Department of Interior was doing for the rest of the people of the Pacific area. I don't believe the UN team ever knew about NTTU. They probably got the same trip to Bridwell's quarters I did. In any case, when the history of the post-World War II struggle between East and West is finally written, I'm sure Saipan and NTTU will be prominently mentioned.

We did some more excavation around the perimeter of the cemetery; this time outside the northern end, but found nothing. We needed Devine to show us the spot, but permission was still being denied to him. We did find where the house Kinley had entered once stood, and we found a huge mound which must be the command post he speaks of. It would be, of course, a major and expensive earth-moving job to open it up.

Ross Game, Captain Quintanilla, Eddie Camacho, Father Sylvan and I went back over every piece of testimony, and even managed to turn up some new leads. The consensus: They were more convinced than I. Two American flyers, a man and a woman, bearing an almost unmistakable resemblance to Earhart and Noonan had indeed been brought to Saipan by the Japanese in 1937.

The most important event of the third expedition came one morning at the mission house. One Jesus De Leon Guerrero, a native Saipanese, came to see me. Father Sylvan served as interpreter. Guerrero proposed a trade. He had been collecting scrap from the war for years and had a mountainous pile. If I would arrange for a Japanese ship to come to Saipan to pick up his scrap, he would give me the conclusive answer to the mystery of the two American flyers.

I remembered several Navy and Department of Interior people telling me that U.S. policy was that no Japanese ships were permitted to enter the former mandated islands.

I couldn't have changed that policy if I had wanted to, which I didn't. No story can be bought without being tainted. I told Guerrero, through Father Sylvan, that if he had anything to say to me, he'd better say it now. There would be no deal. Guerrero blinked, turned on his heel and walked out of the mission. The most striking thing about the whole conversation was that I recognized Guerrero. He was the native who had been in my Quonset that rainy night the year before. Father Sylvan told me later that the rest of the natives fear Guerrero. Before and during the war, Guerrero worked with the Japanese military police.

The trip in '62 produced another vital piece of information. Ross and I went down into the Marshall Islands, and found Elieu. Elieu teaches at the Trust Territory school at Majuro. He tells exactly the same story he told to Bogan and Toole in '44. The American flyers landed near Ailinglapalap in 1937.

And now, as you read this, I'll once more be on Saipan. There is one important difference this time. Thomas Devine is with me. After nearly a four-year effort, permission has finally been granted for him to enter the island.

Why has such an effort been necessary? What about Japan? This long after the war, wouldn't she be willing to admit an incident involving two white flyers?

The answer is *no*. It involves far more than the detention of Earhart and Noonan. Japan has categorically denied building military facilities in the mandated islands prior to Pearl Harbor. In the war crimes trials in Tokyo in 1946 and '47, Japan stated, "The airfields and fortifications in the mandated islands were for cultural purposes and for aiding fishermen to locate schools of fish." It is obvious that Japan cannot admit an incident involving two American flyers before the war without also admitting a far graver sin—the necessity for covering up their activities in the mandates. If Japan ever concedes that the islands were used for military purposes, it will represent a violation of the League of Nations Mandate, a breach of international law, a most serious loss of face and the loss of the last chance to get the islands back.

Is there any other way to clear up the mystery, through extant records perhaps?

I don't know. The records that might shed light upon this matter seem beyond our reach. According to the United States Navy, Army and other departments of the Government, the following have been declared "missing, destroyed, or returned to Japan":

Twenty-two tons of Japanese records captured on Saipan, which were never interpreted.

The radio logs of Commander Bridwell's four United States logistic vessels.

Records of a physical examination of both Earhart and Noonan, including dental charts made by Navy Chief Pharmacist Mate, Harry S. George, in Alameda in the year 1937.

The large bulk of Naval intelligence records for the Pacific from 1937 to 1941.

In spite of the fact that the Navy sent the carrier *Lexington* to Howland Island in 1937 and spent some $4,000,000 in a fruitless search, their official position today, at least to CBS and the Scripps' League newspapers, is that "the Earhart-Noonan disappearance is a civilian matter. There has been and is no reason for this Department to make an investigation."

Bridwell told me an ONI man conducted an investigation in 1960 after my first visit, and the testimony could not be shaken. The Navy maintains there has been no investigation at all. As recently as four months ago, Captain James Dowdell, now Deputy Chief of Naval Information in Washington, vehemently denied to Ross Game that the Navy was withholding any information, and indicated that the Navy hadn't conducted any investigation. *Yet*, just two months ago, the U.S. State Department stated in a letter to me, "The State Department does have a limited amount of information about the Earhart matter which is *Classified*, but the Navy Department has informed us that they conducted a complete investigation in 1960, and there's nothing to the conjecture that Earhart and Noonan met their end on Saipan."

As I said earlier in this article, I can't really blame the Navy Department for its evasiveness. The Navy was fronting, at any cost, for the CIA, and it's going to be a wee bit embarrassing, at the very least, to clear the record now.

Were Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan on a spy mission in 1937? I simply haven't the space to begin that discussion here. Let me simply say that those "two American flyers" on Saipan are, I believe, the key to an even more incredible story: The twenty years in the Pacific before Pearl Harbor and a bitter battle between departments of our Government over what to do about the Japanese mandated islands.

There are many who say that the enigma of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan is best left untold. "Embarrassment of Japan at this time would not be wise," they say. "What good can it do to rake over old coals?"

My answer is a simple one. With most Americans, the individual still counts. Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan fought a battle for most of their lives against the sea and the elements, not against men bent on war. We orbit men around our earth and turn our eyes to the stars and what may lie beyond because of the courage and contribution of such as Earhart and Noonan.

If they won their greatest victory only to become the first casualties of World War II, the world should know. Honor for them is long overdue.

When all is considered, a single question remains: If the two white flyers on Saipan before the war were not Amelia and Fred, who were they?

Within the next few days, we may know the answer. • • •